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FAREWELL SERMON

OF THE

REV. JOHN BRADLEY, D. D.,

GRADUATE OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY, ENGLAND,

WHO MAKES A PUBLIC

RECANTATION OF THE PROTESTANT FAITH

AND

JOINS THE CHURCH OF ROME

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A PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CLERGYMAN GOES OVER TO THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

THE REV. JOHN D. BRADLEY, OF THE ORATORY OF ST. SACRAMENT, DELIVERS A FAREWELL SERMON TO HIS CHURCH, AND ANNOUNCES HIS ADOPTION OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC FAITH.—A SYMPATHIZING CONGREGATION AND AN AFFECTIONATE AND TOUCHING PARTING.

The Rev. John D. Bradley, a graduate of Oxford University, England, where he obtained the degree of Doctor of Divinity, and who has officiated as pastor of the Protestant Episcopal church—"Oratory of St. Sacrament"—West forty-third street, between Ninth and Tenth avenues, New York, made a public recantation of the Protestant faith in a farewell sermon to his late congregation. The congregation was quite unprepared for this avowal of a change of faith, and it was received with tears by many of those who heard it. The congregation desired Mr. Bradley to reconsider his determination, and expressed to him their great sympathy and affection. Mr. Bradley is a young man, about thirty years of age, with a fine, intellectual appearance, with pleasing and captivating manners.

The congregation has been distinguished for its extremely ritualistic character. The church is fitted after the manner of Catholic chapels—with altar, candles, candelabras, crucifix, and sacred pictures suspended on the walls. The rubric of the Protestant Episcopal Prayer Book has been observed, but has been always interpreted in the spirit of the Catholic Church, and has been treated as closely after the formula of the latter as was consistent with the office of priest under a Protestant Episcopacy.

While the change of faith might have been expected, from all this, its announcement yesterday was received with great surprise on the part of a majority of Mr. Bradley's congregation.

THE SERMON.

"Now Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

MY DEAREST BRETHREN :—I stand up here before you this morning to address you for the last time as a pastor of the Anglican or Protestant Episcopal Church. And since it would be an unmanly thing for me to turn my back on you, whom I have loved so sincerely, and who, I know, have returned my love with equal sincerity, without some parting words of explanation and good will, I have forced upon myself the sad task, trusting to Divine grace to carry me through with it. And, my brethren, I throw myself upon your generosity, inasmuch as I have had hardly any time to prepare the wording of this address, and the little time I have had has been distracted with pains in the head as well as pains in the heart. You know we have all loved our Anglican Church

very clearly—none more so than I have done. It contains in it so much that commends itself to our religious and natural instincts. While, moreover, we have always regarded it as a branch, and that a very pure one, of the holy Catholic Church, we have thought that its faith was the faith of the Church in every age, and that the so-called Reformation was a reformation not of faith but of mere matters of ecclesiastical discipline—as, for example, the appeal to Rome, communion in one kind, celibacy of the clergy, services said in dead language, and such like matters—but that the faith remained the ancient faith, whole and undefiled, as it had once for all been delivered to the saints. We have been faithfully conscious that our Church was an asylum for many and congenial spirits, the children of many generations of Protestants and Puritans, whom the Church was too weak to cast out of her pale, while she was too indifferent to insist upon their dutiful submission in her pale. We have also been equally conscious that our bishops fall very far short of what our ideal Catholic bishop ought to be. They truckle to public opinion, and are the slaves rather than the lords of their wealthy clergy and influential laity. But we have always believed that God the Holy Ghost so overruled the united action, that however diverse their sentiments might be as private doctors, or theologians, still God would never allow them to stultify themselves as an episcopate or a Church. On this matter we appealed with confidence to the past and the future, declaring our willingness to leave the Church when it should have proved itself an heresy. We have not closed our eyes to the fact that the Anglican Church is in a state of schism, that is, that all intercommunion

is suspended between that body and the ancient Roman and Greek communions. But we have thought her attitude a justifiable one, the natural result as Papal aggression and political Jesuitical intrigue; and while with Dr. Pusey we would have been willing as a body to submit to Papal supremacy, we have deprecated individual secession, since, as individuals, we have not thought ourselves personally culpable. Roman Catholics and orthodox Easterns have warned us that our Church did not possess the gift of indefectibility in faith, and we have as confidently retorted—"Time will prove." My brethren, time has proved. Above all we prided ourselves upon the truth of the validity of our order, and the patent fact that our Church, in her liturgy, articles and rituals, undoubtedly taught the real presence of our Lord, under the forms of bread and wine. Oh! how rudely the mask has been torn from our eyes! The bishops of this so-called Catholic Church meet together in Baltimore for solemn council, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. They inaugurate their proceedings with the celebration of the most divine Eucharist. This, at all events, seems encouraging. In thought we wander back to the great synods of the undivided Church. We gaze with child-like pleasure on the stately procession; we listen with beating heart to the ancient chant; we look with awe on the closed golden gates, behind which the bishop is consecrating the blessed sacrament; we think we hear the grand, old, uncompromising words of the liturgy of St. Chrysostom, "Make this bread the precious body of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." We see in imagination the curling incense ascending, and the prostrate adoring

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multitude of the faithful, and we compare with this the awful reality seen at Baltimore. My God ! just think of it ! The service is over, the blessing pronounced, and bishops, with patens full of consecrated bread, and chalices of consecrated wine, are laughing and talking, and eating and drinking, while the body of the Church is a scene of uproar, gossip and confusion. Such is the inauguration of the so-called Catholic Synod. The proceedings are on a par with its commencement ; while its termination is nothing less than suicidal and tragical. This Synod turns out to be an Episcopal attack on the two great sacraments of the Gospel—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Both are explained away in order to take to the Episcopal embrace, not Catholics, who are already sufficiently scandalized at our ecclesiastical attitude, but heretics, who deny all those truths which distinguish Anglicanism from other forms of Protestantism. The bishops, with that wonderful official self-importance so innate in Anglican prelates, presume to define what the Catholic Church means, or rather does not mean, by the terms regeneration in baptism. They declare that baptism does not effect a moral change. Now, of course, the word "moral," as applied to the effect of baptism, was unknown to the Fathers of Trent, and by a charitable quibble the denial in the strictest sense of a moral change may be allowed to be not distinctly heretical. But, alas ! we know for whose relief those words were uttered at all. Men who deny baptismal regeneration, and, certainly, the public in general take the denial of the Catholic doctrine, which declares in the words of the Fathers of Trent, "By baptism we are signed with a character which can never

be blotted out of our souls. God makes nothing in the regenerate, because there is no condemnation to those who by baptism are truly buried with Christ.* * But putting off the old man and putting on the new, who is created according to God, they are made innocent and spotless, pure, without hurt, and beloved of God." And the proceedings in the lower house of priests and laity are characterized by a like spiritual perversity. One reverend divine thinks the Episcopal Church is tottering because he had seen two or three clergymen prostrate before the sacrament, and (only think of it) their foreheads to the floor. And among all that crowd of the clerical and lay representatives of the Episcopal Church, one only, on the last day of the Convention, avowed his belief (all honor to him) in the Catholic verity of the real presence. And what, my brethren, is the tragical end of the whole matter? A pastoral letter from the bishops, containing these two astounding statements :—"The doctrine which chiefly attempts as yet to express itself by ritual, in questionable and dangerous ways, is connected with the Holy Eucharist. The doctrine is emphatically a novelty in theology."

What is known as Eucharistical adoration is undoubtedly inculcated and encouraged by that ritual of posture lately introduced among us, which finds no warrant in our "Office for the administration of the Holy Communion." Although men may, by unlawful reasoning on Divine mysteries, argue themselves into an acceptance both of the practice and the doctrine which it implies, these are most certainly unauthorized by Holy Scripture, entirely aside from the purposes for which the Holy Sacrament was instituted, and most

dangerous in their tendencies. To argue that the spiritual presence of our dear Lord in the Holy Communion, for the nurture of the faithful, is such a presence as allows worship to Him thus and there present, is, to say the very least, to be wise above that which is written in God's Holy Word ; for the objects of this holy sacrament, as therein revealed are, first the memorial before God of the one sacrifice for sins forever ; and secondly, the strengthening and refreshing of the souls of the faithful. Moreover, no one can fail to see that it is impossible for the common mind to draw the line between the worship of such an undefined and mysterious presence, and the awful error of adoring the elements themselves. Wherefore, if a teacher suggests this error by act of posture, he places himself in antagonism to the doctrine of this Church and the teachings of God's Word, and puts in peril the souls of men. In the presence, therefore, of this danger, we call upon the ministers and members of the Church, to bear in mind that while they should always cherish and exhibit that true and genuine reverence which devoutly recognizes " the dignity of the holy mystery and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof ;" yet it is the bounden duty of each one to deny himself the outward expression of what to him may be only reverence, if that expression even seems to inculcate and encourage superstition and idolatry.

The bare suggestion that the intercession of the Virgin Mary, or any other saint, is in any way to be sought in our approaches to the throne of grace, is an indignity to the One only mediator and intercessor. which we, His Apostolic witnesses, cannot too strongly nor distinctly

forbid in His holy and all-sufficient name. To this miserable heretical pronouncement every bishop in the Episcopal Church is committed. One, indeed, is said to have privately expressed a regret at a clergyman's supper table; but the leading High Church prelate is understood to have publicly defended the document in a Church journal, though not under his own name. And not one single Episcopal voice has been raised in protest. On the contrary, the conservative Bishop Whittingham, of High Church memory, insists that this pastoral is binding on the consciences of all the clergy as the unanimous voice of the "teaching order" in the Church. Now, my dearest, dearest children, do accept "the urgency of these visible facts," as Dr. Newman puts it. Come down from your lofty pedestal of imagination. Blow away the phantom of a future council of undoubted Christendom, and condescend to look at facts, as true as the fact of my speaking to you, that had any bishop or number of bishops given vent to such an utterance in the days of undivided Christendom concerning the eucharist, holy baptism, and the Mother of God, they would have been deposed, degraded, and excommunicated. So that, as a matter of fact, we are in communion with heretics; we teach by the authority of heretics. We not only disobey the Apostolic precept, "with such a one not to eat;" but we even receive holy communion at the hands of those who acknowledge that they do not so "discern the Lord's body" as to feel they may worship Him there present. "Ah! what communion hath light with darkness, what fellowship hath he that believeth with the unfaithful!" Remember the disciple whom Jesus loved, who, as an old man, never

preached anything else but "little children love one another." When he was bathing one day he was told that a heretic was in the water with him, and so anxious was he to get away that he forgot the laws of modesty and propriety. Yes, in communion with heretics! I am told, in the church dedicated to the holy communion in this city, the pastor, on last Christmas day, communicated a Unitarian. And it is a matter of notoriety that Bishop Porter recently admitted a Presbyterian clergyman to holy communion in St. Thomas' church, Fifth avenue, and going forward shook hands with him at the altar rail before the whole congregation, as a mark of his fraternal regard. There, my brethren, go, at a sweep, Episcopacy, baptismal regeneration and the real presence; while extreme unction has been lost for three hundred years, and the less said about holy matrimony and the divorce system the better. And, in speaking of extreme unction, I admit that its practice has not wholly died out. It is still administered now and then. Still, as a matter of fact, it is not recognized in the Prayer Book, nor is there any authorized form for its administration, and its use is limited to one clergyman, say in a hundred. The plea for this manifest disobedience to God's word, is that unction was one of the miraculous prerogatives of the Apostles. But the sacred text says, "Is any sick let him call," not the Apostles, but the ordinary presbyters of the Church. And as for the preference that unction was a miraculous preservative against death, it is absurd, for had it been so, faithful Christians would never have died at all. There is a plea put forth by High Churchmen that the pastoral letter is not synodical; but this does not alter its heresy. Heresy does

not require synodical sanction to make it heresy. How refreshing it is to turn from the babel of Protestantism to the Church which says, and has recently said so positively, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that I shall keep that which I have committed unto him until that day." And, indeed, dear brethen, I myself, who am small and of no reputation, a mere grain in the sand, a drop in the ocean—I thank God I know it too—I profess myself a thorough convert to the doctrine of Papal supremacy. The Church of England accepts the Bible, the three creeds and the four first Œcumenical Councils as her rule of faith. Now, I have taught you that when our Lord said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my Church," He did not mean Peter, but the faith which Peter confessed. This interpretation I backed with quotations from Augustine and Chrysostom. I moreover stated quite confidently, that the Eastern Church never acknowledged the Pope's supremacy. Both these statements I entirely withdraw. The Fourth General Council (Chalcedon), composed chiefly of Greek prelates, committed itself in a synodical pronouncement to these words:—"The thrice-blessed and all-honored Peter, who is the rock and basis of the Catholic Church, and the foundation of the orthodox faith." Now Augustine and Chrysostom were both in their graves, and their interpretations must have been known to the Fathers of the Council; still this Council, which we accept as infallible, has forever set all doubt at rest by affirming that Peter was the rock, not only of the Catholic Church (as the Latin Church was called), but also the foundation of the orthodox faith, as the Greeks were wont to speak of their religion. Then again, as a matter

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of fact, St. Chrysostom, who is quoted as against Papal supremacy, when he was deposed by a synod of his provincial bishops, himself appealed to Rome. Brethren, mine, please acknowledge (as I said before), the urgency of these historical facts. I am, my brethren, astonished that others should not see these things as I do ; but I know how blinded with prejudice I have been, and as it has been with me, so it is and will be with others. " Seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not comprehend," and as I appealed to history, I cannot but acknowledge that there are many difficulties. But there are no difficulties in the Roman system to be compared with the difficulties in the Anglican. While Roman Catholics may differ in matters of state, opinion or policy, we are all at sea on the question of each and every sacrament, while the presiding Bishop of the whole American Episcopal Church (the Bishop of Ohio), is known to think episcopacy the most valuable and useful form of Protestantism ; but certainly not of divine origin, or essential to true Christianity. But, my brethren, you will say, " what of papal infallibility ?" I confess it has for me a great charm. Our Lord is, of course, the head of His church ; but He has a vicar upon earth. The visible church must have a visible head, the infallible church, an infallible head. The Pope cannot err, ministerially, acting as the head of the Church, though as a private doctor or theologian he may err, and commit errors of judgment in the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline. Our treasure is in an earthen vessel, and, therefore, abuses are to be expected, and the head of the Church is such a head that he may not, for instance, say to the feet, " I have no need of you," nor yet

may the feet say to the head, "I have no need of thee," Yet this is what the Anglican Church did say when she severed herself from Rome. King Henry VIII., and all his successors, since, too, have most positively told the Pope, contrary to the scriptural command, "I have no need of thee." Deny this if you can. "Ah!" your lament, "and so you are going back upon your dear old Anglican Church?" My brethren, no such thing. I am no fanatic. I have neither torn off collar, burned my Bible, nor destroyed my cassock. I leave the Anglican Church, thanking God that there are so many sweet souls in her communion, striving after Catholic unity. Of all forms of Protestantism, Anglicanism is the highest. There is more good among Anglicans than among Presbyterians, more good among Presbyterians than among Baptists, and so on through the grades of Congregationalism, Unitarianism, &c., &c. But high above them all, on the rock, stands the Church of Peter. And if you ask me why I join the Roman communion in preference to any other, I will answer as Father Ignatius Spencer did, who, formerly an Anglican clergyman, died a Catholic priest: "Father, why do you always travel third class?" "Because," rejoined he, "there is no fourth." And so I join the Roman communion because there is nothing higher I can join. It is the genuine and perfect form of Christianity. For it was not without reason our Lord said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you (the Apostles) that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that the faith fail not." And, as a matter of fact, the faith of the Roman Church never has failed, never will fail, for He, who is the truth, has promised

that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Diverse, no doubt, in discipline, as diverse as the characters and temperaments of Catholic nations, but one in faith, communion and obedience. There is, of course, nothing good which cannot be abused ; but I am no more responsible for abuses in the Roman, than in the Anglican pale. As a matter of taste and principle I had rather see a devout old woman bending her knee to a black-faced image of the Virgin in Spain, then go to the vestry cupboard of Trinity Church, New-York, and find a black bottle labelled "consecrated wine." And if we are told of an old Irish woman who said a prayer for the sake of the indulgence attached to it, accompanied with curses for those for whom she prayed, this is not more amusing than the traditional old woman of Anglican fame, who presented herself the fourth time for confirmation, because, she said, "it was good for the rheumatics."

"I believe in one holy Catholic Apostolic Church." Ask yourselves, is the Anglican Church one? It is neither one with itself nor with any other body. Is she holy? She has not canonized a single saint since the Reformation. Is she Catholic? No, merely national. Is she Apostolic? No one accepts her orders but herself; and many of her greatest lights do not believe in their necessity at all. One word more and I have done. It was not without some insight into the future of Christianity that our Lord spoke a parable comparing a house built upon the sands, shifting, changing, receding, at the mercy of wind and wave, to the house built upon the rock. What is the rock?" Council held infallible by your own Church teaches you, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock," &c. In conclusion, do not let my course,

or the slanderous tongues that will lash me when this thing is publicly known, frighten you back into Protestantism. If Roman Catholicism is so manifestly an error, it will bear examination. Just exercise your common sense, and, as you would do in a matter of business speculation, search and look ; consult teachers on both sides, and, like people of common sense, judge between them, never forgetting the necessity of prayer and the fact that neither father nor mother, nor any social or worldly interest are to be preferred to the sweet will of our only Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus-Christ.

February, 1872.

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